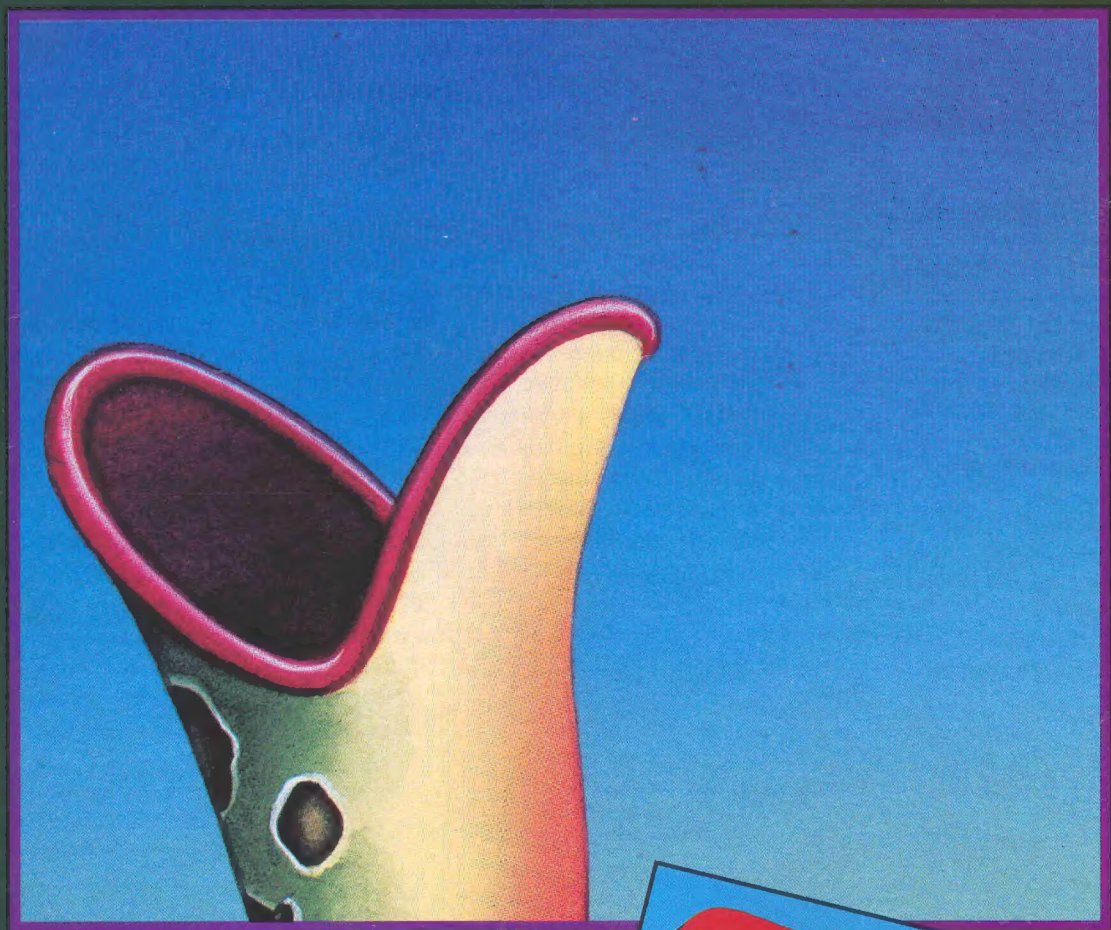


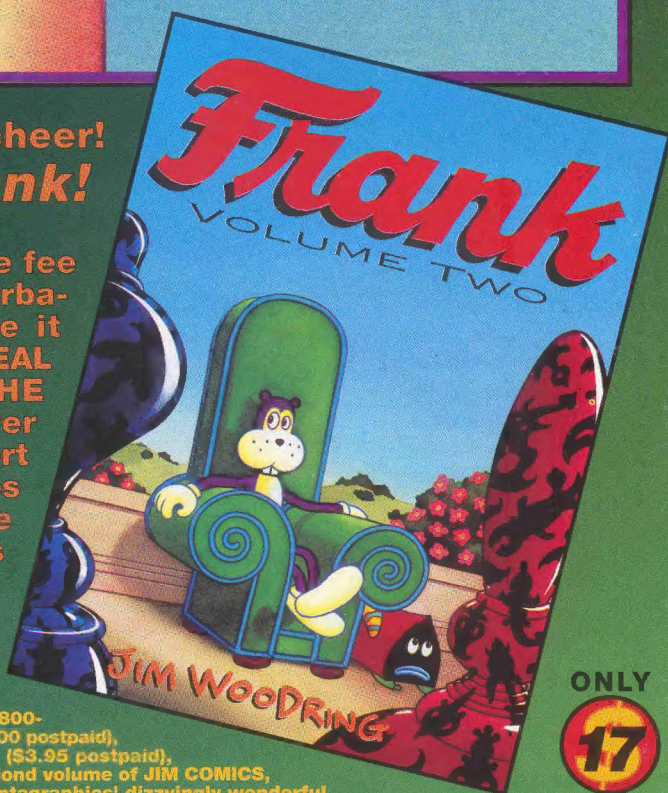
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MARTIN WAGNER'S

Hepcats

NUMBER 7 MARCH 1998



1997
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STUDIOS



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Antarctic Blast

March 1998

Write to us at: Antarctic Press/7272 Wurzbach, #204/San Antonio, TX 78240

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ANTARCTIC PRESS ATTRACTIONS (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

March 1998 ATTRACTIONS

Shotgun Mary #1

**Shotgun Mary Leather
Jacket Figure**

Shotgun Mary T-Shirt

Silver Cross #3

Warrior Nun:

Black and White #8

Lillith #1

Lillith Action Figure

Warrior Nun #5

Robotech #7

Gold Digger #39

Hepcats #7

Hepcats #8

Helter Skelter #6

Nosferatu #4 (Venus)

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March Madness! by Joeming W. Dunn, MD

If you have been reading my editorials these past few years, you may have realized I am a sports nut. This time of year is especially exciting for me because of MARCH MADNESS. That's when 64 colleges enter the basketball championship tournament to decide who becomes national champion. This tournament is great because it's a SINGLE ELIMINATION tournament—once you lose, you're out. No best of seven or round-robin elimination crap. It makes for good drama because even a small school can win this tournament. It rarely happens, but it gets people excited about even the remote possibility of an upset. So don't try to reach me during the tournament...I'm rooting for Princeton!

Congrats to Brian Denham and Lee Ann Garner, who tied the knot on February 13th. They must be crazy because (1) they got married on Friday the 13th and (2) they both work in the comic industry.

Recently, Marvel Entertainment had a contest for retailers. It basically asked "If you were editor-in-chief...what story ideas and creative teams would you make?" Since I'm not just a publisher, but also a retailer (our store is called Excalibur Comics and Videos and is located in San Antonio), I thought, "Why not enter?" I had several ideas, including the following.

a) ROM the Space Knight and Men in Black crossover—I thought it would be cool if ROM and the MIB duo both went after some sinister Dire Wraith.

b) Marvel characters back in time—What would it be like if Spider-Man was a spy during World War II, Captain America fought during the Civil War, or

Mutants existed during the Salem witch trials?

I had some other ideas too, but I can't remember them now. In any case, I got a call from Marvel, who said they appreciated the ideas so much that they were going to send me a prize. I mentioned the fact that I won a contest at Marvel before and didn't have a pleasant experience. When I was kid I collected a series called *The Human Fly* about a stuntman. They had a contest to design your own stunt for a page of original artwork. When *The Human Fly* #19 came out, there was my name stating my entry as a winner. Needless to say, I didn't get squat. Well, this time they did send some very nice prizes which I appreciate and now have displayed in my office.

Despite the fact that the comic industry in general is in a slump, we have seen efforts among publishers to try to get some excitement back in the industry. We even have some fun stuff coming up in conjunction with DARK HORSE COMICS, associated with the FLAMING CARROT and USAGI YOJIMBO action figures we are producing. I love the stuff DARK HORSE does. It has diversity and quality in its line from *manga* to *STAR WARS*. Of course, I still have a copy of *BORIS THE BEAR*, published in the old days of DARK HORSE.

We have also licensed the RAZOR action figure from LONDON NIGHT STUDIOS. Look for it in October of this year. As of this writing, the WARRIOR NUN AREALA: OVA figure should be in your local comic store.

Until next time.

FOR THE LOCATION OF YOUR NEAREST COMIC STORE CALL 1-888-COMICBOOK

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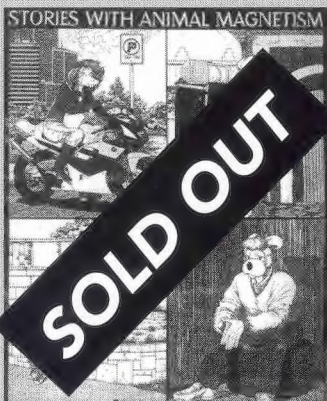
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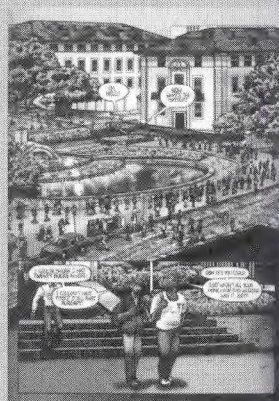
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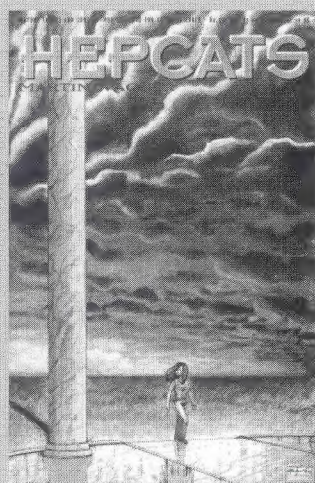
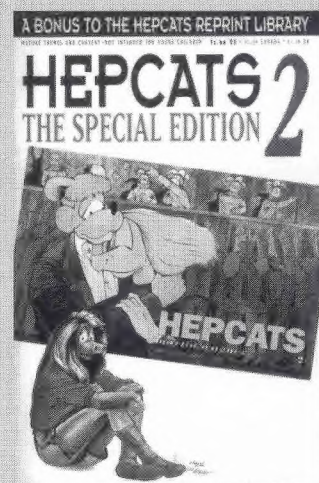
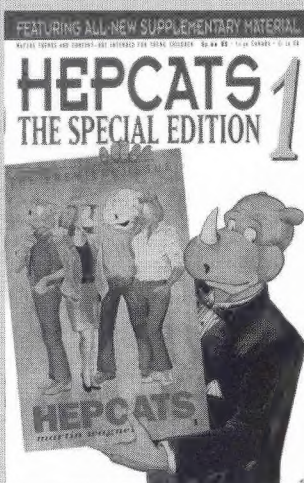
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Hepcats Snowblind

CREATED, WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY

MARTIN WAGNER

COVER COLORED BY JOCHEN WELTJENS

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY

DOUBLE DIAMOND PRESS, MARCH 1991

WAY OF THE WORLD PROLOGUE

DRAWN AT RHINOCEROS STUDIOS,

AUSTIN, TEXAS, AUTUMN 1997

ISSUE NUMBER 7

MARCH 1998

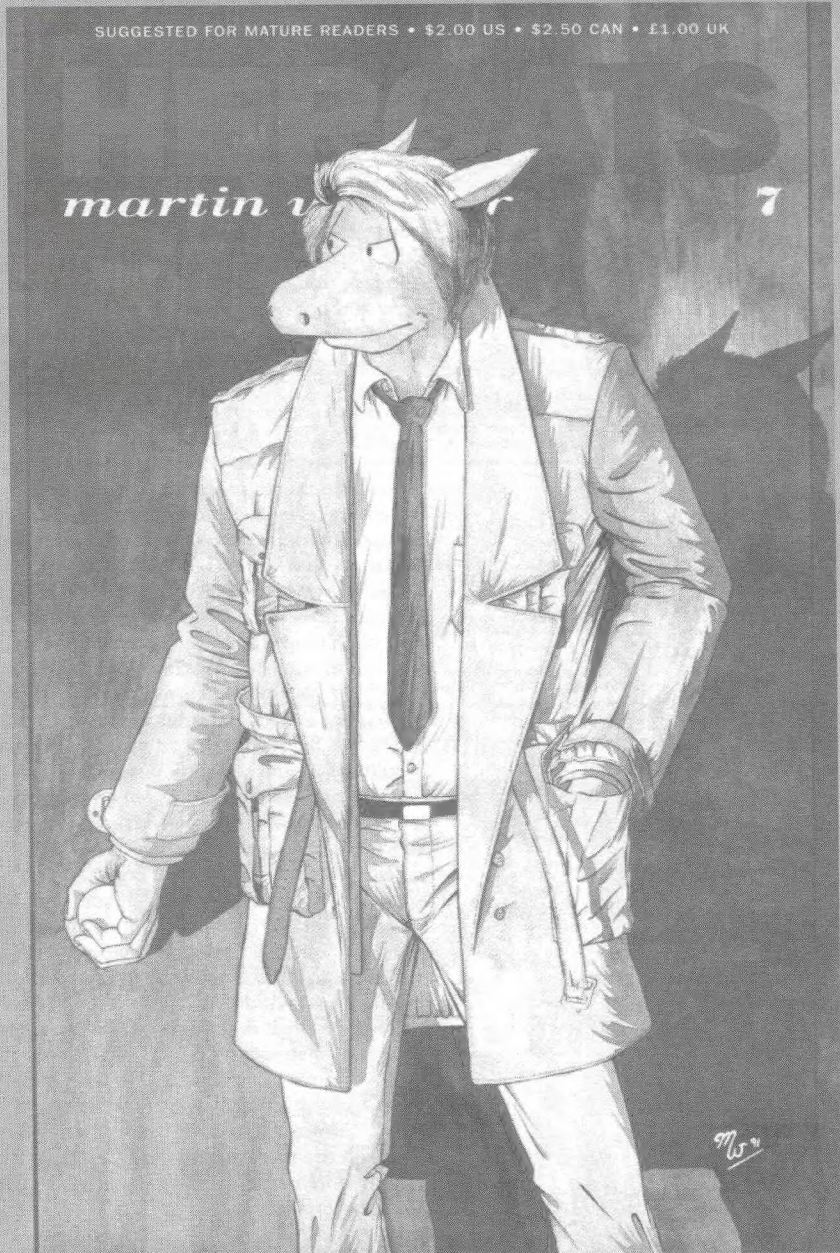
Chapter 5

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7



ANTARCTIC PRESS
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THE FULL ARNIE

HEPCATS 7

CREATOR'S COMMENTARY TO 1998 EDITION

(These introductions are provided by Martin Wagner as exclusives to the Antarctic Press reprints of *Hepcats*' first 12 issues. Unlike others, you might actually want to read this issue's intro before the story for a change.)

People often look for reasons to be pissed off at me, and in *Hepcats* #7 they found one. Nudity! Horrors! The end of Western civilization is upon us!

This issue of *Hepcats* was kept behind the counters of many comic shops when it first came out, and indignant letters flooded my mailbox, and all I could think of was: *My my, people. Our double standards are showing, aren't they?*

You see, there have been several instances of nudity in issues prior to this one, just as there will be occasional instances of nudity in future issues as I deem either necessary or harmlessly non-intrusive to the narrative. But this time, I showed the dreaded male organ, which caused howls of outrage (curiously, entirely from men) in some circles. Women either didn't care or thought it was a treat that a comic book artist would give equal time in the bare-bod department, which says a lot for women's generally more refined sexuality. The most common criticism levelled against this sort of thing in entertainment, not just in comics but films as well, is that it is "gratuitous." Since "gratuitous" is a word that is bandied about in our culture almost every bit as much as "genius" (so that it has almost become stripped of any meaning—"stripped," har, get it!?), I can say that in the case of this comic, you will never see me include anything I think to be gratuitous. I think any creator who would deliberately insert an element into his art that he believed to be gratuitous doesn't have the brains God gave Pauly Shore. In the instance of this particular story, the nudity simply makes sense: view the scene. Arnie and Erica are sharing a moment of intimacy before the fireplace. In the context of such a scene, it is perfectly logical for them to be naked, as the likelihood they are about to make sweeeeet luuvvv (sorry, been watching too much *South Park*) is pretty good. It was not necessary, and therefore not included, to depict the lovemaking itself, since the story is a character study and not one with an overtly sex-centered theme. (And in fact their passion gets pre-empted, so tough beans anyway.) But the nudity is, like other elements of *Hepcats* that fans praise for the same reason, realistic. (At least it was based on my relationship at that time. There would be entire days Tif and I wouldn't wear a thing at all, since we might jump each other at any moment. And to think my mom is reading this.)

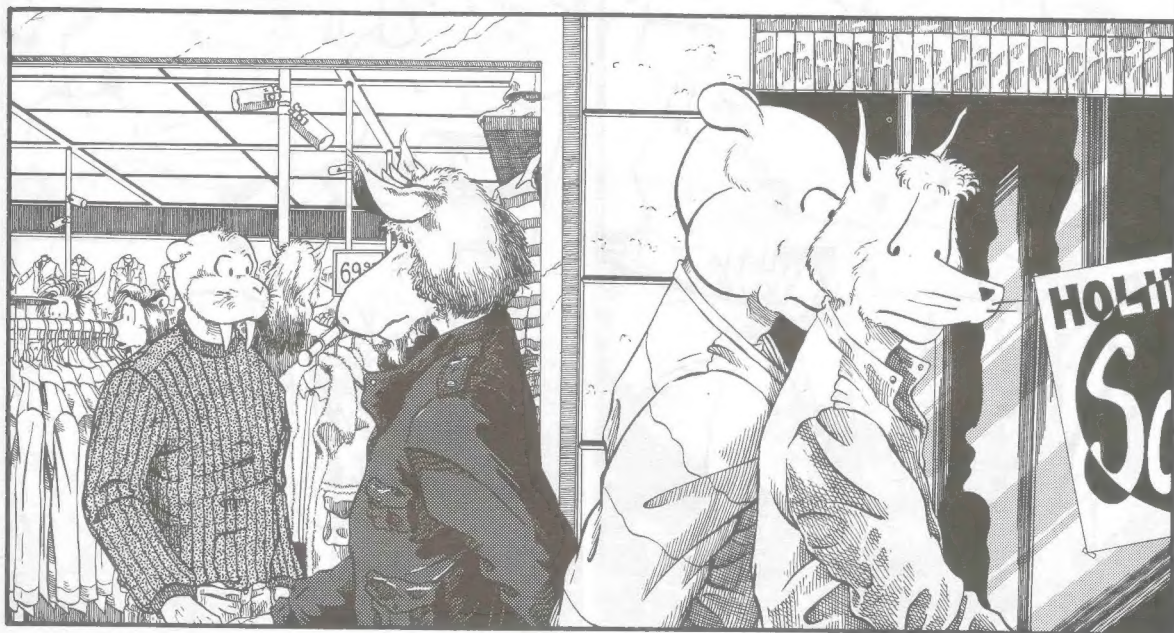
But the fact is that there was a bigger issue at stake here than what I'd done in the pages of *Hepcats*. It's rooted in our culture's spectacularly fucked-up and ass-backwards attitude towards sexuality. America, if not the rest of the world (Europe is seriously more advanced than we here), is this strange, sexually puritanical society that worships violence. Comics with sex and nudity are relegated to back rooms, if they're ordered at all for fear of police action. And yet, *Spawn* and similarly gory exercises in mayhem are sold to kids as if they were *Richie Rich*. (It wasn't the sight of children's severed fingers in one issue that angered parents over *Spawn*; it was an innocuous ad for *Gay Comics* on a back cover.)

This kind of skewed thinking towards sexuality pervades all areas of our society, not simply our entertainment. Of all the people vilifying Bill Clinton right now for his fling with that porky intern (I happen to like Clinton and even I think he's as guilty as a puppy standing next to a pile of poo), how many do you suspect are cheating or have cheated or have thought about cheating on their own spouses? Retired cheesy actor Charlton Heston has condemned Clinton's low moral fibre, and yet Heston is a mouthpiece for the NRA who believes one of our "inalienable" rights as citizens is the right to own an assault rifle, a military weapon invented for the sole purpose of killing humans. What sort of moral stance is that? A nonexistent one.

And yet, for all our moralistic hand-wringing over the evils of smut on the Internet or at the corner convenience store, what have you, the numbers speak for themselves: porno is a \$10 billion per year industry. That's "billion" as in Carl Sagan. That figure is incidentally higher than the combined annual sales of rock and country music recordings. A culture which attacks sex at any time it is brought into the open, into the mainstream, and yet spends more money on smut than it does on music, can be summed up in one word: h-y-p-o-c—(ahh, you finish spelling it).

I personally have never thought that sex and bodies are all that big a deal, and so it was nothing at all for me to draw the scene. But if you find yourself taking offense at the mere sight of nakedness, just try something for a change: pause a moment and ask yourself, *why does this offend me? Is there really anything wrong with it, or am I just giving a conditioned response that is part and parcel of my upbringing?* If you find after private reflection that your offense is genuine, that these thoughts are your own, then swell. But just pull back a minute; that's all I suggest. Because, frankly, that's all you're gonna get from me on this one, kiddos. See, I'm just not a guy to apologize for things in this comic you may find offensive. Because *you* are the one who chooses what offends you in this life; I have nothing to do with it. But what I *can* do is help some folks shed their cultural programming....







GUNTHER, LISTEN,
I'M SORRY IF I PISSED
YOU GUYS OFF, BUT...

WHOA, ARN!
ARNIE, DON'T APOLO-
GIZE TO US, MAN.

I KNOW YOU'RE
UPSET ABOUT WHAT
HAPPENED TODAY.
I WOULD BE, TOO!
YOU DON'T HAVE
TO BE SORRY ABOUT
THAT.



LOOK, MAYBE I BUTTED IN
WHEN I SHOULDN'T HAVE, BUT
I JUST THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE,
YOU KNOW, GETTING ON ERICA'S
CASE A LITTLE BIT, THAT'S ALL.

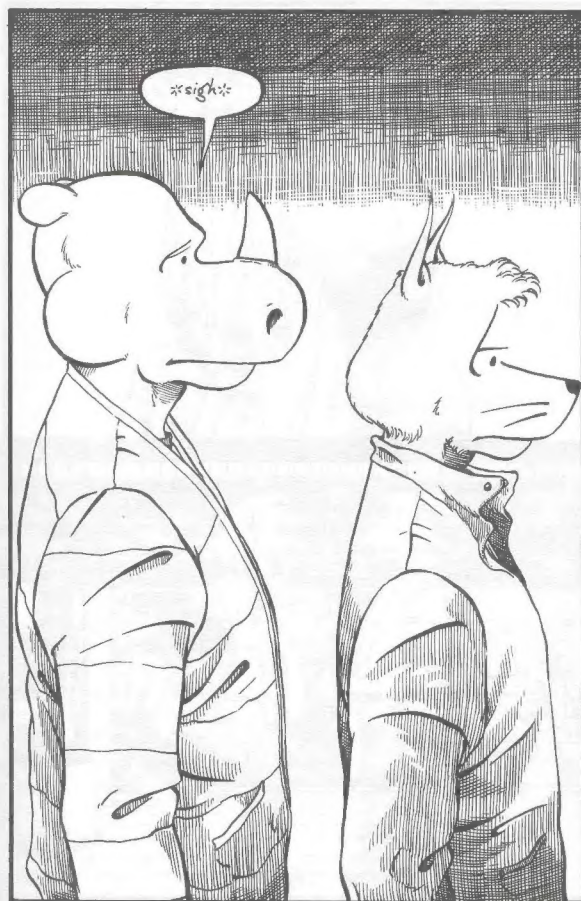
I UNDER-
STAND YOU
DIDN'T...

ERICA'S OUR
FRIEND, TOO, YOU
KNOW. WE DON'T
WANT ANY WEIRDOS
GETTIN' THEIR
HANDS ON HER,
EITHER, OKAY?



RIGHT... LISTEN, I'D BETTER CATCH UP TO
HER. I'VE GOT A FEELING I'VE GOT A LIT-
TLE EXPLAINING TO DO. I'LL CALL YOU
GUYS, OKAY?

SOUNDS GREAT,
ARN. TAKE IT EASY!





SEE, THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED.

FIRST, YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T HOLD ARNIE'S LITTLE ANGRY OUTBURSTS AGAINST HIM, YOU KNOW, LIKE THE WAY HE CUSSED ME OUT AFTER MY FIRST FAINTING SPELL BY THE BOOKSTORE, AND THE WAY HE GOT ON MY CASE AFTER THE POLICE LEFT. SEE, ARNIE HAS A LOT OF HIS OWN INSECURITIES TO WORK OUT... AND, WELL, THE WAY I SCREAMED, HE DIDN'T KNOW...

~: sigh ~:

SORRY, GIVE ME A SECOND.

WHAT I SUPPOSE I'M TRYING TO SAY IS THAT LOVE MAKES YOU BEHAVE FUNNY.

YOU KNOW, NOT ALWAYS SENSIBLE. I KNOW, I KNOW, "GEE, THAT'S KINDA OBVIOUS." BUT YOU KNOW HOW THEY SAY THAT THE BEST WAY TO BE IN LOVE IS TO LOVE YOURSELF? THAT YOU REALLY CAN'T LOVE ANOTHER PERSON UNLESS YOU LOVE YOURSELF FIRST? WELL, I'M SURE THAT'S TRUE IN PRINCIPLE, AND I GUESS YOU COULD ALSO SAY THAT ANYBODY OUT THERE LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE THAT WELL-ADJUSTED PROBABLY MAKES A HELL OF A PARTNER.

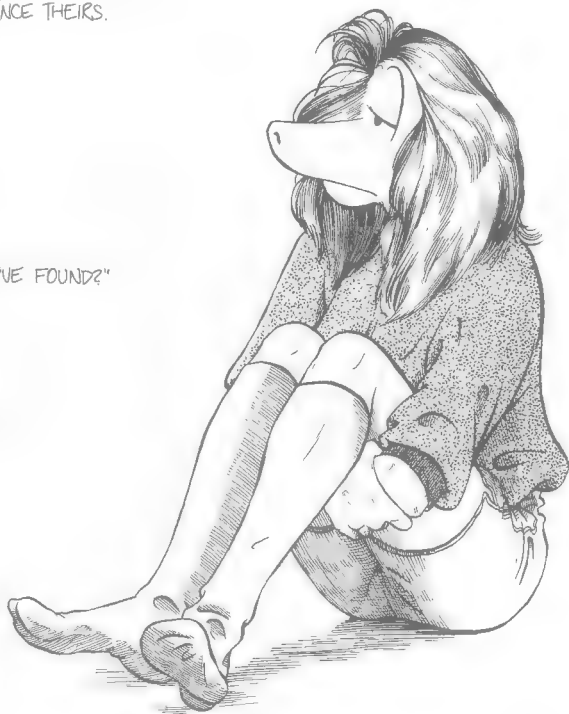
BUT I ALSO THINK IT'S NAÏVE TO BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE VERY MANY PEOPLE OUT THERE LIKE THAT. I THINK THAT MOST PEOPLE OUT THERE FALLING IN LOVE ARE VERY INSECURE, AND THEY LOOK FOR LOVE PRECISELY BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE ANY TO GIVE THEMSELVES.

I'M NOT SAYING THE WHOLE WORLD IS MADE UP OF LONELYHEART PEPPEROSO CASES. MOST PEOPLE MANAGE TO KEEP THEIR INSECURITIES IN CHECK, BUT I THINK MANY PEOPLE STILL HAVE THEM. AND WHEN THEY LOOK FOR A RELATIONSHIP, THEY LOOK FOR SOMEONE WHOSE INSECURITIES SORT OF BALANCE THEIRS.

WHICH IS WHY WHEN YOU FALL IN LOVE IN A SITUATION LIKE THAT, YOU DO LOSE A LOT OF YOUR INSECURITIES, BUT YOU GAIN SOME NEW ONES.

LIKE "CAN I KEEP THIS WONDERFUL NEW THING I'VE FOUND?"

"WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME IF I LOSE IT?"



OH, WELL, MAYBE I'M WRONG. MAYBE I'M
STICKING THE REST OF THE WORLD WITH MY
PROBLEMS SO I'LL FEEL BETTER.

STILL, IF YOU'VE EVER BEEN IN A RELATIONSHIP
OR YOU'RE IN ONE NOW, YOU'LL KNOW WHAT
I MEAN ABOUT HOW YOU SUDDENLY FIND
YOURSELF IN A FIGHT WITH YOUR
PARTNER...

...OVER STUPID
SHIT, RIGHT?

LITTLE THINGS BECOME SO PERSONAL!

ANYWAY, I'M GETTING SIDE-
TRACKED. THE REASON THE SITUATION
AT THE MALL GOT SO OUT OF HAND
WAS BECAUSE EVER SINCE I MOVED
TO NEW ORLEANS—1983—I HAD
CREATED A NEW LIFE FOR MYSELF,
AND I HAD SYSTEMATICALLY BEGUN
BLOCKING OUT THE OLD ONE.

TELLING MYSELF IT WAS ALL A NASTY
HORRIBLE DREAM THAT WASN'T GOING TO
BOTHER ME ANY MORE, EVEN THOUGH
MEMORIES AND NIGHTMARES STAYED
WITH ME FOR A WHILE. BUT EVEN
THEY FADED...BEFORE LONG.

SO WHEN I SAW KEVIN (THAT'S HIS
NAME, KEVIN), I FREAKED BECAUSE PART
OF MY OLD LIFE HAD CAUGHT UP TO ME.
AND I SUPPOSE THE REASON I DIDN'T
GO RIGHT OVER THE EDGE IS BECAUSE OF
THIS LITTLE REALISTIC SECTION OF MY
BRAIN THAT TOLD ME IT MIGHT HAPPEN
SOMEDAY.

WHICH WAS WHY I DIDN'T TELL ARNIE WHO
KEVIN WAS...EVEN THERE IN THE ALLEY.
I WANTED TO DEAL WITH IT. SO IT'S MY
FAULT ARNIE WAS HURT.

IF I'D SAID SOMETHING, ARNIE
WOULDN'T HAVE FELT HE HAD TO
PROTECT ME.

BUT AFTER THE MALL, I WAS OKAY.
KEVIN HAD COME, AND KEVIN HAD GONE.
MY PAST HAD CAUGHT UP TO ME AND
I HAD DEALT WITH IT!

I WAS STILL ME!

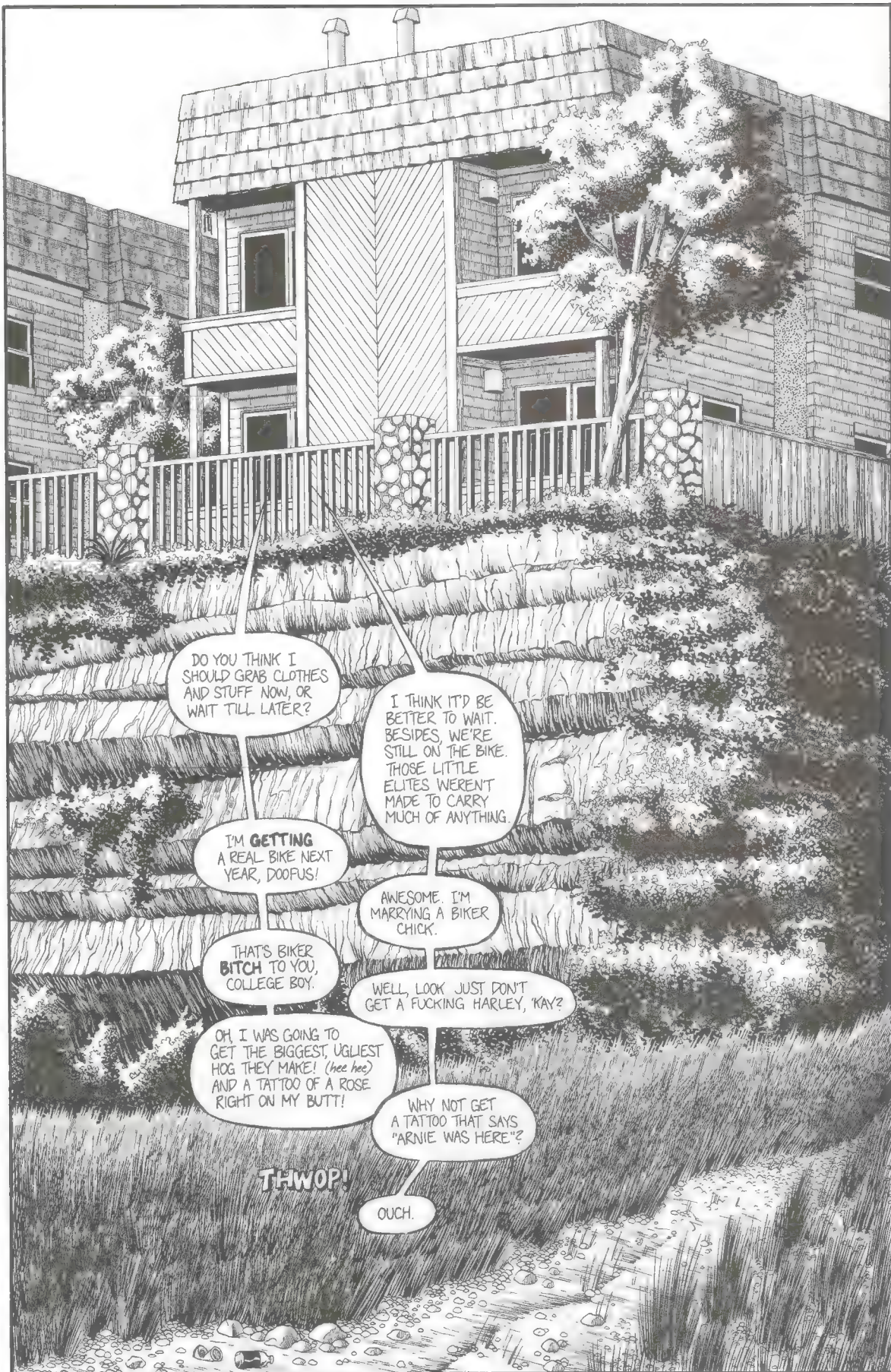
WELL, I GUESS YOU CAN FIGURE OUT
THE NEXT LINE. "ALAS, THINGS DID
NOT STAY HUNKY-DORY FOREVER!"

SOMETHING LIKE THAT, YEAH.
BUT I GUESS IT'S TIME TO SHUT
UP AND LET YOU READ ALL
ABOUT IT YOURSELF.



YOU KNOW, I'VE JUST ABOUT HAD IT WITH THIS DAMN FOOT.





DO YOU THINK I
SHOULD GRAB CLOTHES
AND STUFF NOW, OR
WAIT TILL LATER?

I THINK IT'D BE
BETTER TO WAIT.
BESIDES, WE'RE
STILL ON THE BIKE.
THOSE LITTLE
ELITES WEREN'T
MADE TO CARRY
MUCH OF ANYTHING.

I'M **GETTING**
A REAL BIKE NEXT
YEAR, DOOFUS!

AWESOME. I'M
MARRYING A BIKER
CHICK.

THAT'S BIKER
BITCH TO YOU,
COLLEGE BOY.

WELL, LOOK JUST DON'T
GET A FUCKING HARLEY, 'KAY?

OH, I WAS GOING TO
GET THE BIGGEST, UGLIEST
HOG THEY MAKE! (hee hee)
AND A TATTOO OF A ROSE
RIGHT ON MY BUTT!

WHY NOT GET
A TATTOO THAT SAYS
"ARNIE WAS HERE"?

THWOP!

OUCH.



IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU
LEARNED WHO WEARS THE
LEATHER PANTS IN THIS
FAMILY

SWEET-
HEART

*smack
smack*



WELL, IT'S SUPPOSED TO GET COLD
TONIGHT, SO LET ME GO AHEAD AND CHANGE
INTO SOMETHING WARMER - AND NICER - THEN
HEAD BACK TO YOUR PLACE, OKAY...?

NO PROBLEM

ANNND



DID I HEAR YOU MENTION
SOMETHING ABOUT DINNER
AND A MOVIE TONIGHT, MM?

UH



YEAH, SURE

sigh IT'LL BE
NICE WHEN FEBRUARY
1st ROLLS AROUND,
AND WE MOVE INTO
OUR OWN PLACE
FINALLY! WON'T
HAVE TO PLAY MUSI-
CAL APARTMENTS
LIKE THIS.



ARNIE! ohem
I **BEG** YOUR
PARDON...!

I JUST THOUGHT
YOU COULD USE A
LITTLE HELP WITH
YOUR...

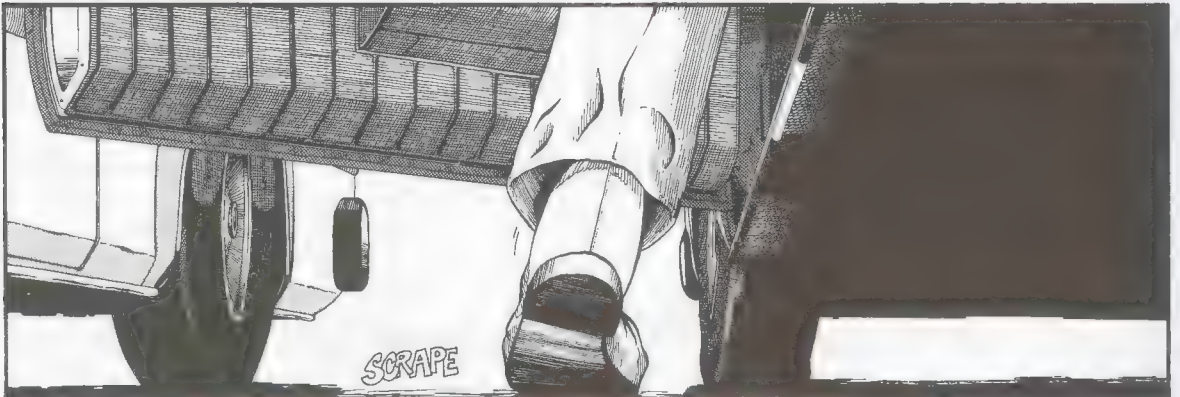
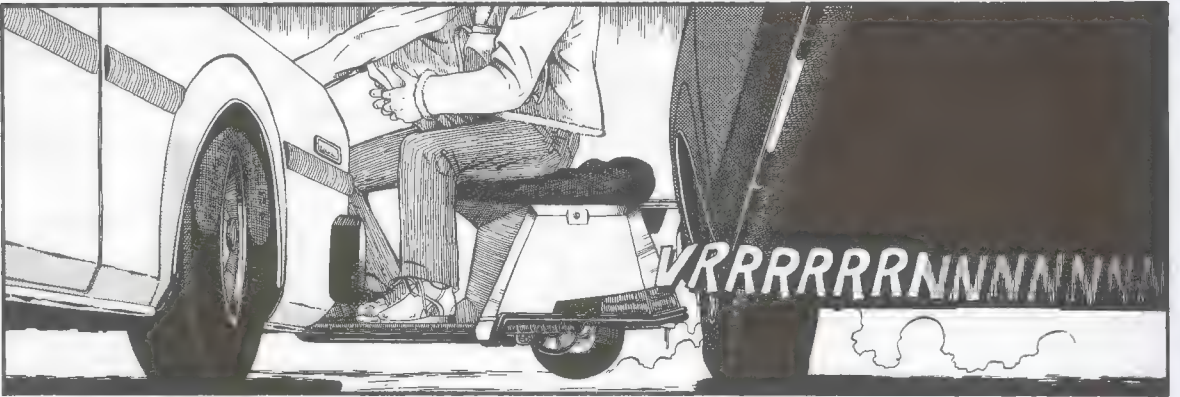
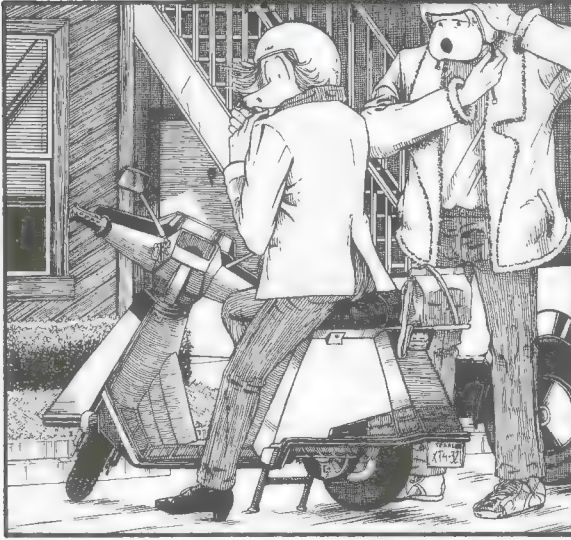
ZZZZZZ

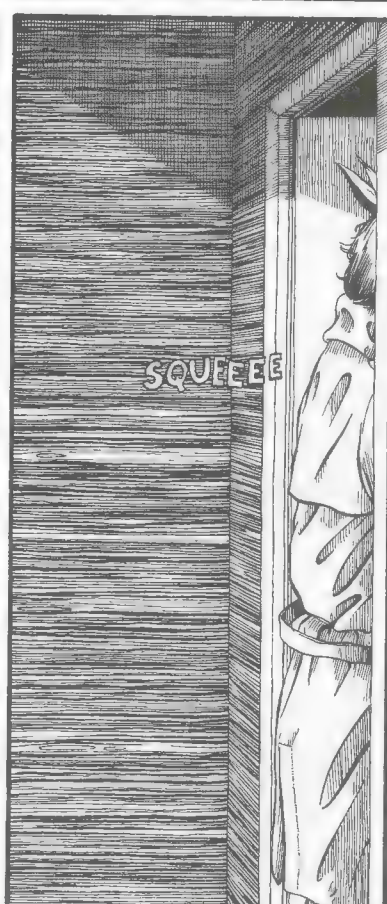
PLOP



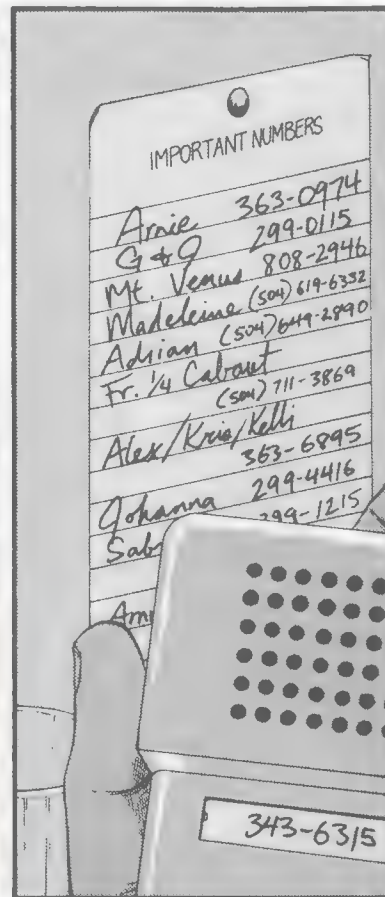
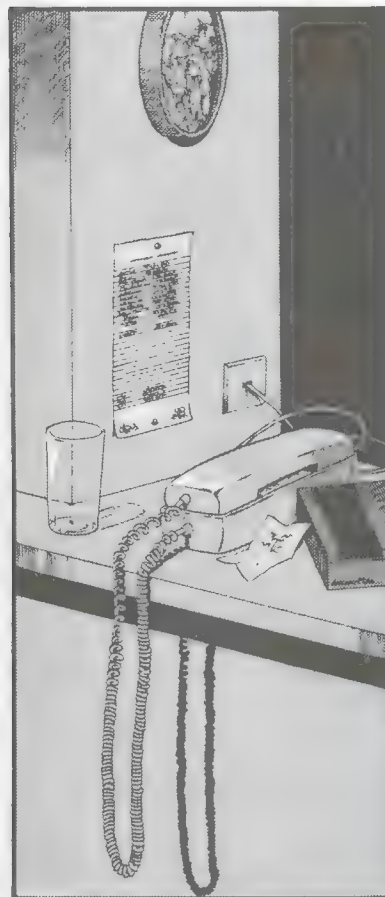
THAT'S
BETTER

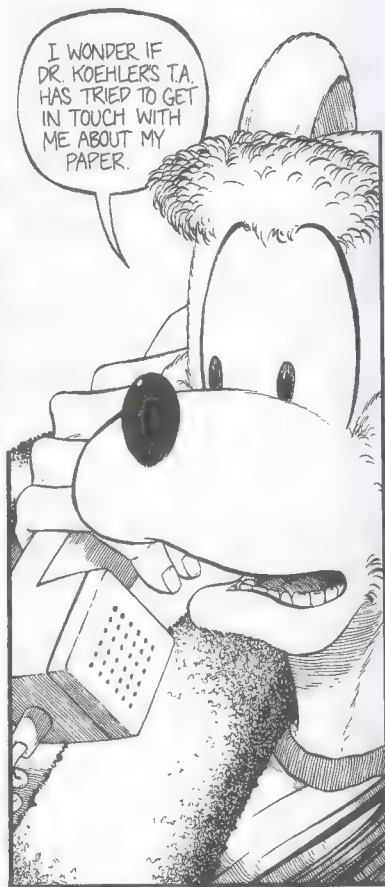
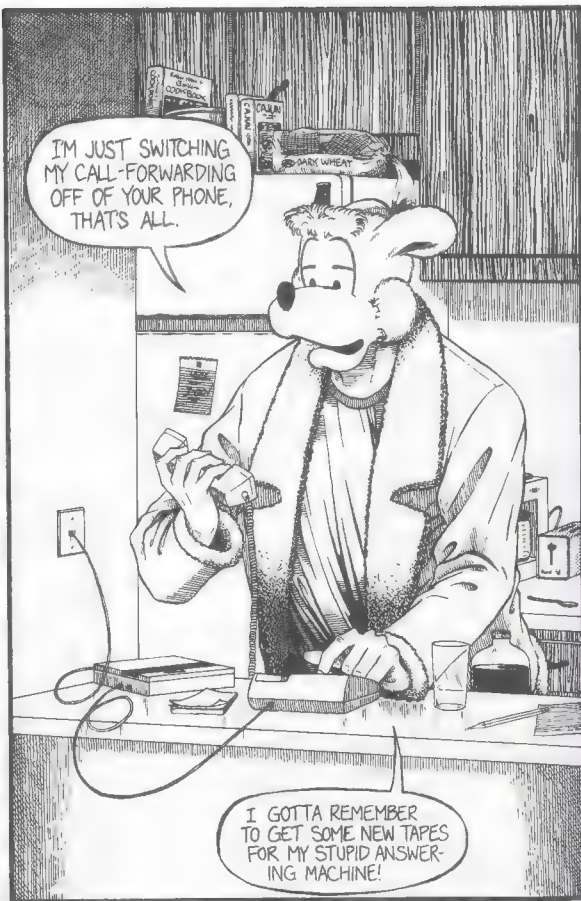
♪ KEEP
GOING! ♪

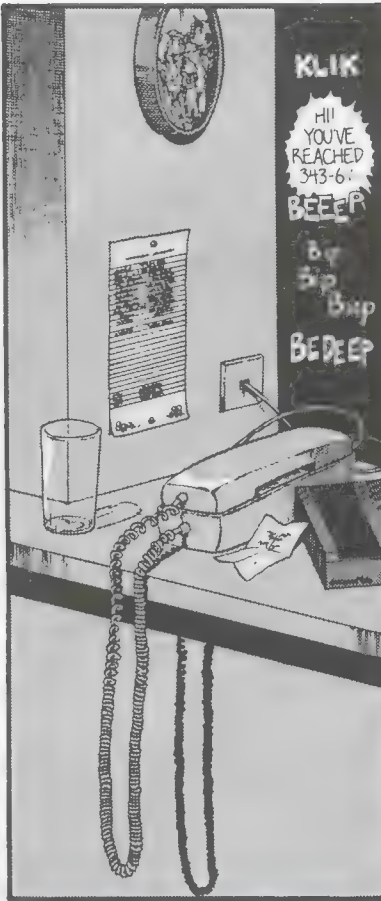














WELL, YOU SURE
DID GET OUT OF ALL
THOSE NICE THINGS
YOU CHANGED INTO
PRETTY FAST,
DIDNT YOU, BABY?

MIND YOU, I'M NOT
COMPLAINING

heh heh

ARNIEZ

YEAH, HON.

NOTHING'S
GONNA CHANGE
WITH US, IS IT?

W..

WHAT DO YOU
MEAN, "NOTHING'S
GONNA CHANGE
WITH US?"

WELL... YOU
KNOW ALL THE
THINGS WE'VE
PLANNED TOGETHER
YOU GRADUATE,
WE GET MARRIED.

MOVE INTO A
MILLION DOLLAR
MANSION IN WEST
LAKE HILLS!

hee hee --
YEAH!

MATCHING PORSCHES,
FLY TO CANCUN EVERY
WEEKEND IN OUR LEAR
JET.

RIGHT. OH,
YEAH.

EXACTLY!
hee hee --
AND THE
CAYMANS!

hee hee
hee hee

sigh

NO, HONEY.
NOTHING'S
GONNA
CHANGE.
WHY SHOULD
IT?

GOOD. 'COS
I DON'T WANT
IT TO.

THEN IT WON'T.
SEE? THAT WAS
EASY.

MM-HMM

...ARE YOU STILL A
LITTLE FREAKED OUT
FROM TODAY?

MM. NO. NOT
REALLY

LOVE YOU.

I LOVE YOU.

YOU WANNA GO
INTO THE BEDROOM
OR SOMETHING?

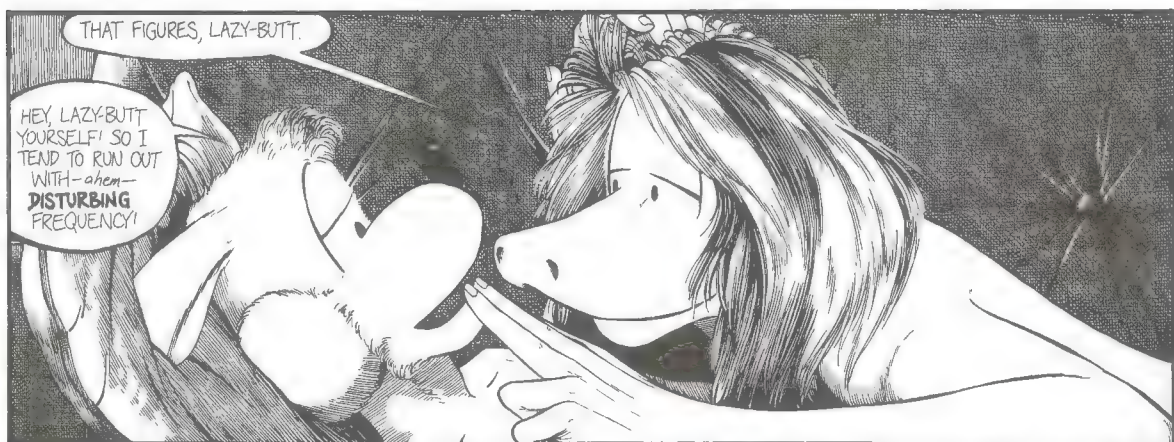
NO, I LIKE
IT OUT HERE.
I LIKE THE
FIRE.

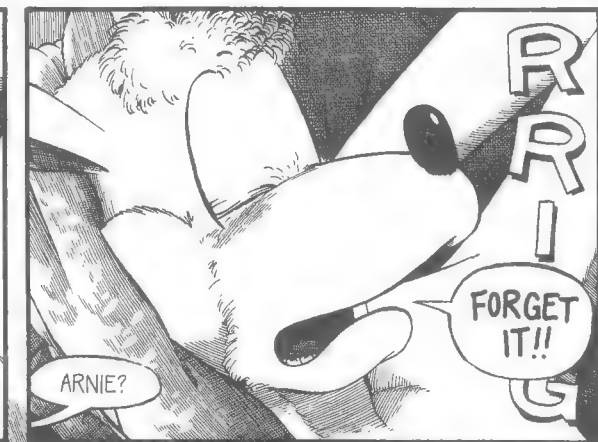
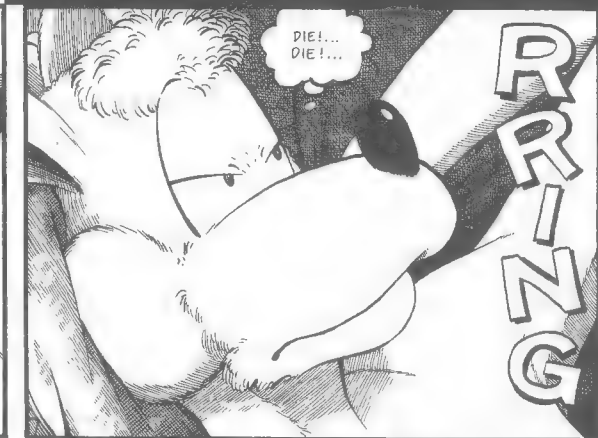
SO DO I.

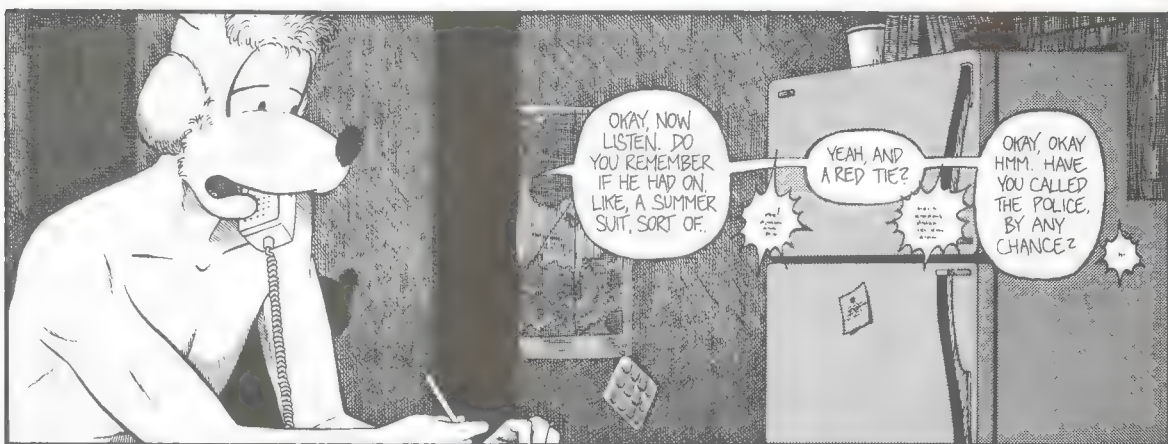
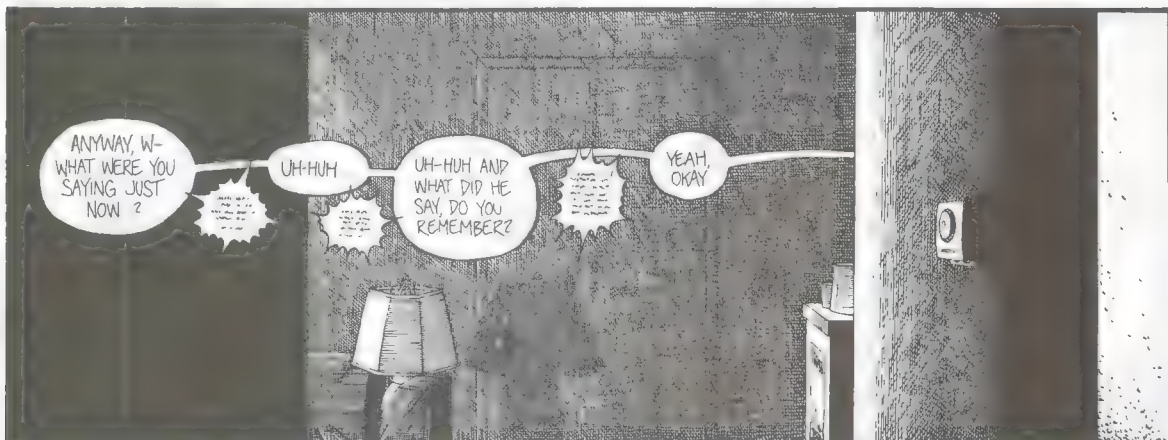
OUT OF
RUBBERS?

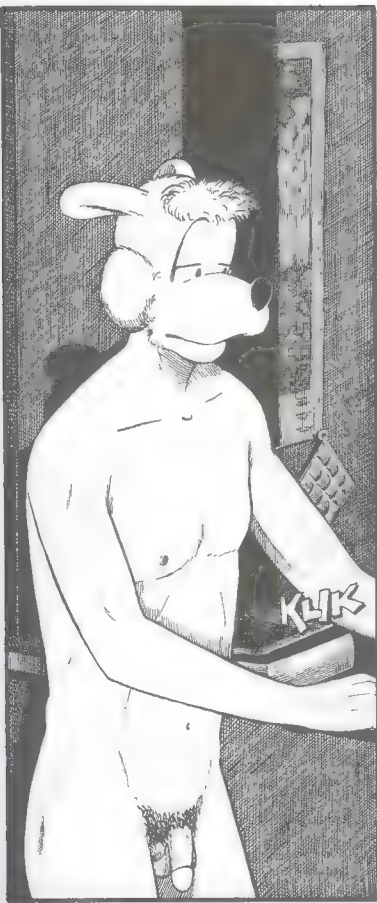
YEAH, I
THINK
SO.











HAPPENED
RIGHT AFTER
WE LEFT TO
COME HERE.
MUST HAVE
FOLLOWED US
HOME.



DEAR Hepcats

P.O. BOX 27157
AUSTIN, TX 78755-2157
hepcats@eden.com

Well, you've got what you wanted...you've increased your fan base by moving to Antarctic Press. Having heard of *Hepcats* before in *Wizard*, I never got to experience the greatness of the comic because my comic store (for whatever lame reason they may have) did not carry many indie publishers, even though I frequently tell them that is where the best comics in the world are found...nobody ever pays me a penny for my thoughts...but since your move to Antarctic, they've carried your wonderful creation, and boy, am I glad they do. I've not read a finer comic in years...pat yourself on the back.

Your artwork is outstanding, your story telling skills rival even the likes of greats such as Neil Gaiman and Frank Miller. You are an extremely talented man.

Due to a recent auto accident, I've been out of commission, unable to work, basically an invalid...but fortunately, my best friend and fiance love me enough to allow me to mooch off of them for a while. And that love is what buys me the latest *Hepcats* on a semi-regular basis. Though they can't afford to support my *Hepcats* addiction and buy every comic and every product you advertise on the back inside covers as well as support themselves, they do what they can, and my withdrawals are usually slight and short-lived. You might wanna send out a special thanks to them...they make me happy and stop my bitching and put food on your table all buy purchasing your comic...what great kids, huh?

Again, thank you for delivering such a extraordinary creation.

Deepest sincerety, grati-

tude, and awe,

RODNEY THOMPSON
PARAGOULD, AR

You know, the more gushy letters I get, the more it makes 'em squirm over at The Comics Journal. Hee hee hee.

Dear Martin,

I'm a big fan of your work and I understand if you're too busy to respond to this.

I recently started putting out my own publication (geek like me) and I'm writing for any sort of advice you might have. I draw for shit but my writing's okay. Issue #1 ran 300 issues done at a local Office Depot on the copiers, the format is a sheet of 8.5 by 11" paper folded in half, 12 sheets of paper (46 pages). Issue two is out now with an initial run of 100 issues. I sell 'em for a buck and it's just assorted writings by me and anyone else who likes to write about various things.

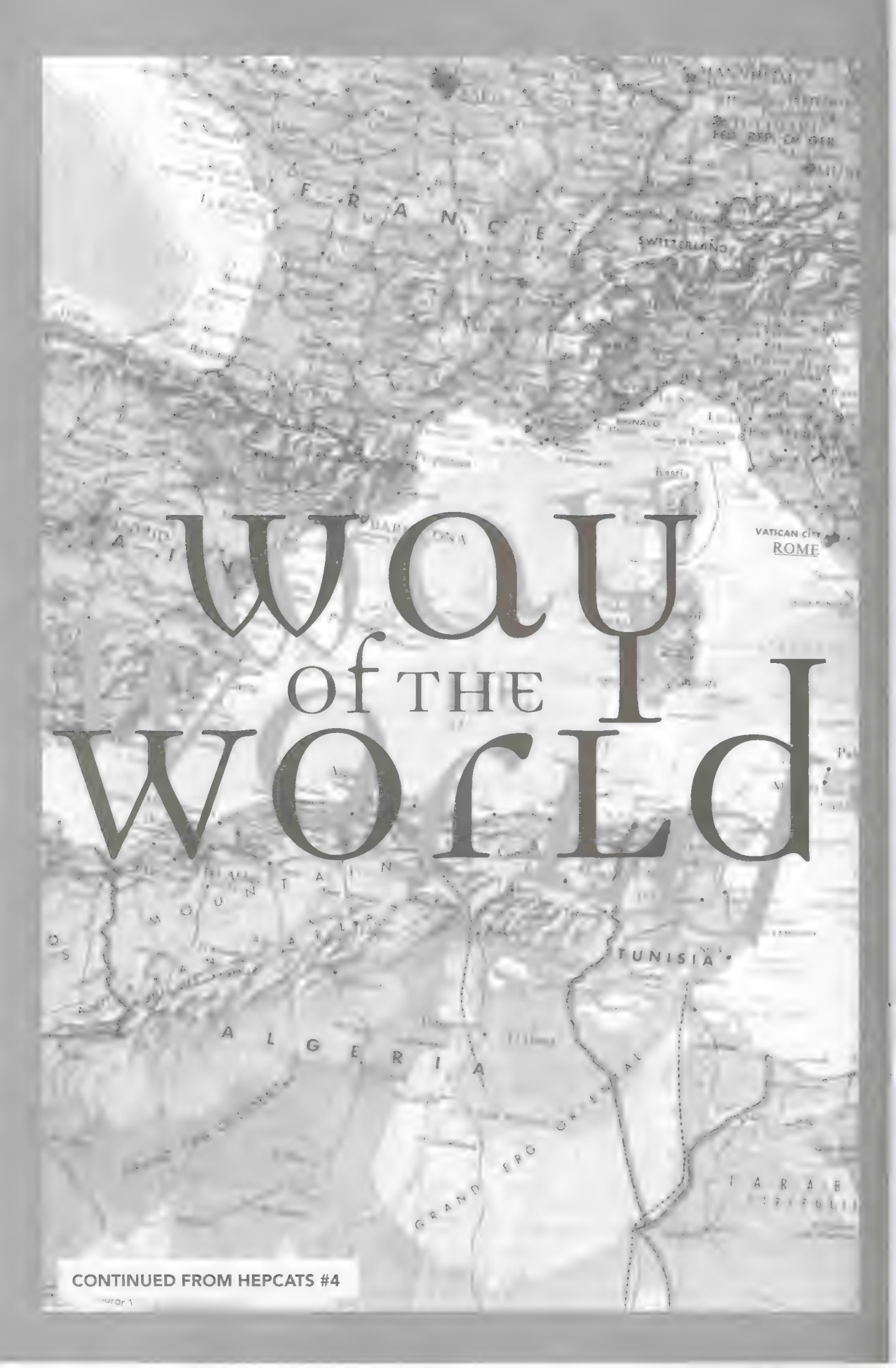
I really enjoy writing. I REALLY enjoy self-publishing! This month I'm gonna be putting out a collection, same format, of four 10 page comic books by 4 different friends of mine. After this long winded introduction basically what I'm after is advice on self-publishing (possibly eventually moving up to a nicer format than Xerox), advice on writing particularly advice on writing fiction and writing for comics and cartoons. I've been into comics since I was 8 and I used to draw my own crude superhero comics during algebra class in jr. high. I realize you do the writing and art for *Hepcats* but do you have any tips on how to best do stories for other people to draw? How to set up the script, what type of art layout (if any) should I have in

mind, etc. Like I said if you're too busy to respond in depth I totally understand, just please let me know either way. Okay? Thanks a lot!

Take care and thanks for *Hepcats*. It's great. I really see a lot of my life as a college student and my friends in the pages of *Hepcats*.

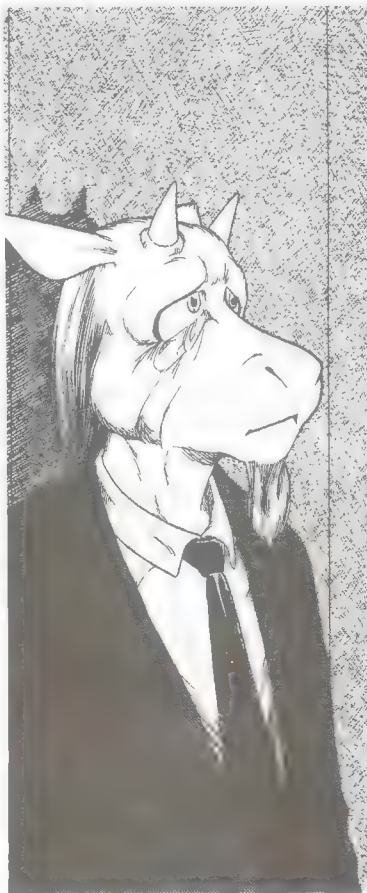
NATE HOLDREN

You really enjoy self-publishing? Boy, you masochist you. Seriously, though, if this is honestly something you want to pursue, be aware that the industry is seriously unfriendly to books like those, and so you're going to find it amazingly hard if your goal is to obtain a sizable readership. (Remember, Bone and Shi are flukes.) If I were you I would stay in the minicomics realm for now, and try also to get some of your cartoons accepted by either your college paper or some other local outlet where your exposure will be substantially larger. One of the truly pathetic facts about today's comics industry is that what we have is a multinational business governed almost entirely by a benevolent-when-they-feel-like-it dictatorship (Diamond), which is signally incapable of selling more than 1000-5000 copies on average of a given small press B&W comic to a network of several thousand comic shops worldwide. Compare this to around 25-30 years ago during the heyday of the undergrounds, in which a ragtag group of regional distributors serving an equally ragtag assortment of headshops and other "counterculture" outlets around the US could still shift 35,000-50,000 copies per issue of Zap and its ilk. Pretty sobering. (As to the rest, just grab your pencil!)

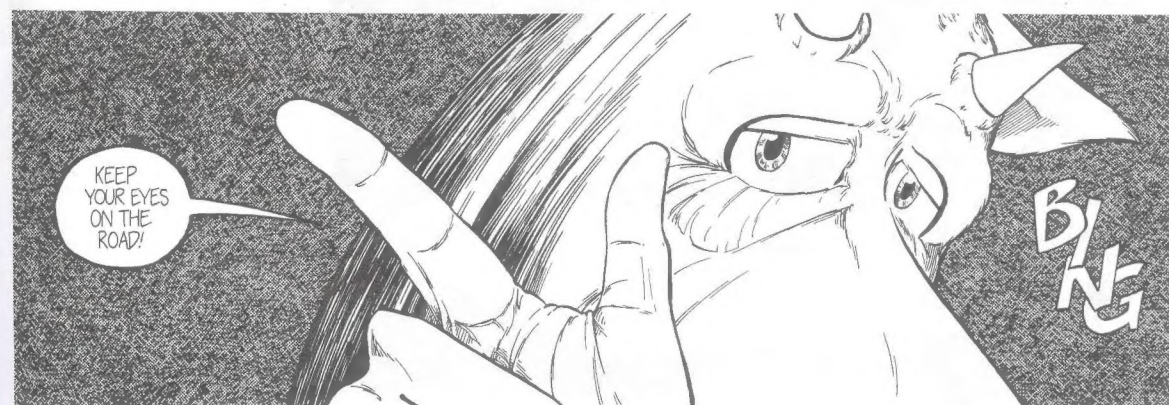
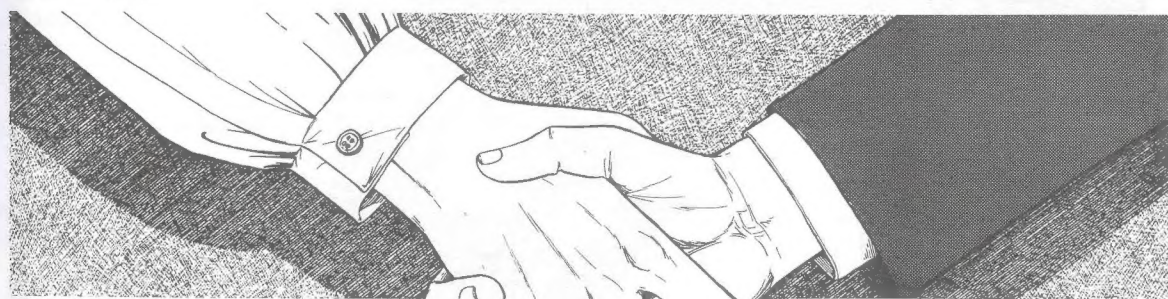
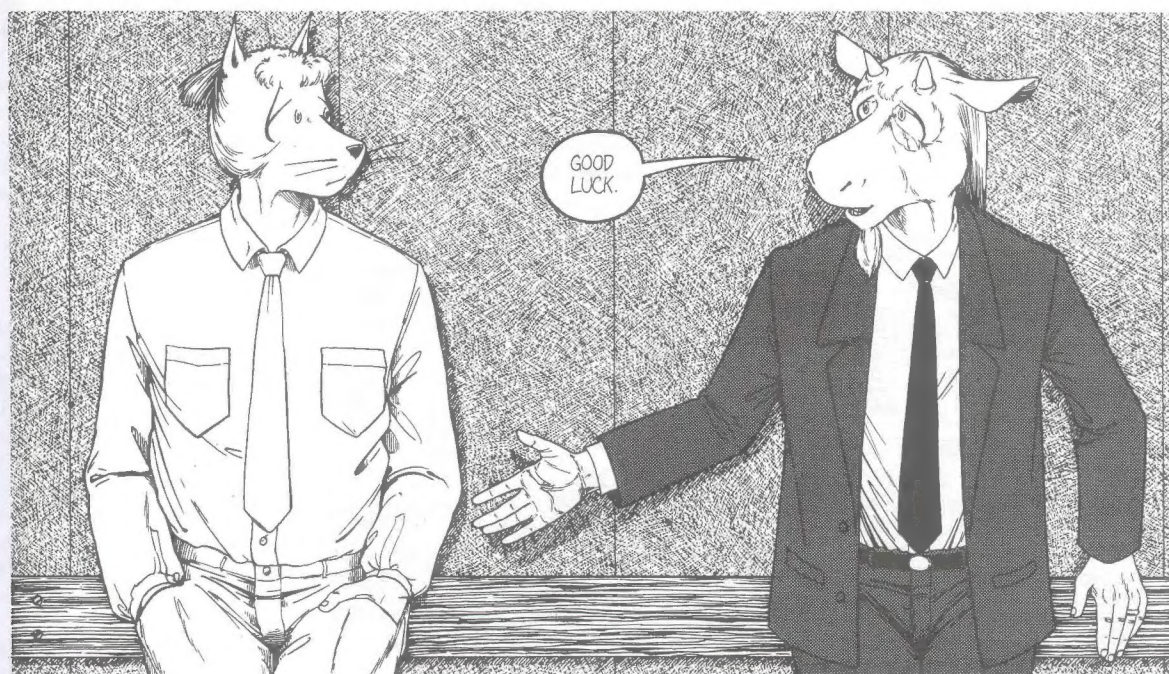
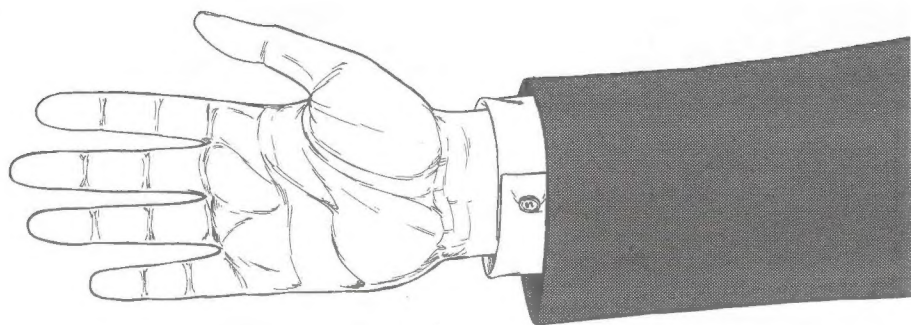


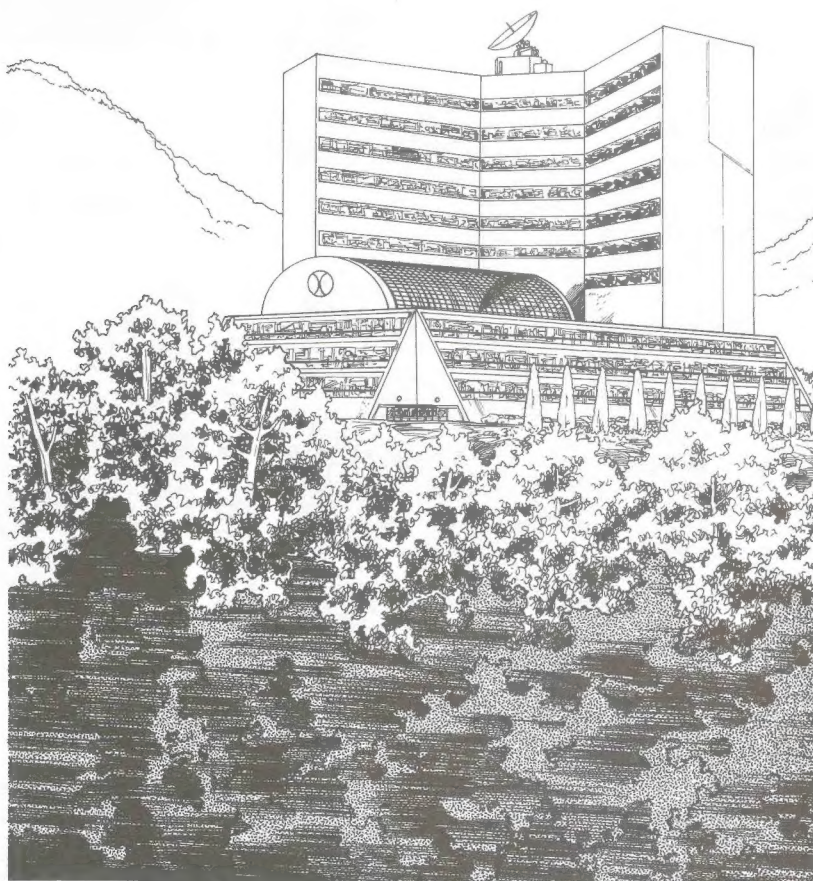
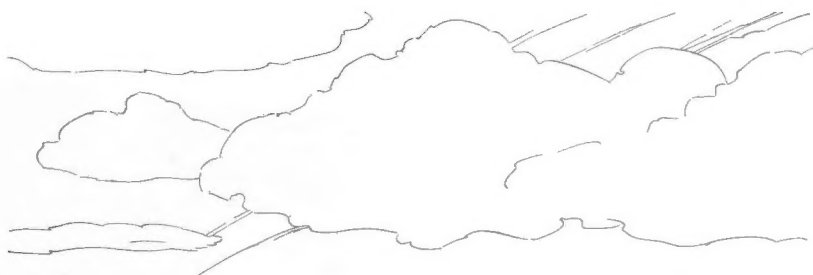
way of the world

CONTINUED FROM HEPCATS #4









As I drove home, through the endless trees of the hill country, I kept thinking about the conversation with Doogan, most frequently with a big stupid smile on my face.

I mean, here's a guy who's got it all, "it" being the criteria that society has labelled as elements necessary to be a successful man, and still knows deep down inside that if he didn't have any of it whatsoever, he wouldn't be any less happy (perhaps moreso, really; no more meetings with idiots on overpriced golf courses) or fulfilled. And that to go the other route isn't really all about avoiding responsibility or adulthood. Or maybe it is—but so what?

Okay, I'm not making sense.

Let me sum it up this way. I'm at a stage where I want out of the life I'm in. But of course I'm afraid that simply by shucking it all, I'll be burning bridges and any number of other clichés that all mean one thing: screwing up bad. Could I end up a bum or worse? Or is this simply a temporary escape I want to make? A simple time out to clear the cobwebs?

My lunch with Coogan told me that, yeah, I was still pretty confused about all this. But that being confused was perfectly normal.

And whatever it is, I have to do it.

Now, when I get home, there's one more guy I gotta contact....

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